

[Becky Sanford]

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Range-lore

Nellie P. Cox

San Angelo, Texas.

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RANGE-LORE

"My father's people were connected with the earliest days of Texas Independence," says Mrs. Becky Sanford of San Angelo, Texas. "General Edward Burleson and Dr. Rufus Burleson were cousins of my father. We are proud of the name.

"It seems that my father moved over the State considerably, possibly for grass for he had large herds of longhorns. There were no fences, of course, and riders were kept busy. Mother has cooked for twenty-five or thirty cowboys at a time. [C.12 - 2/11/41 - Texas?]

"I have seen a great many Indians. I remember seeing an Indian, stealing a horse from my father's barn. He had a rope over the horse's head and the Indian kept his head and arms right up under the horse's head and neck to keep father from shooting. Father shot anyhow and the Indian let go of the horse, 2 and ran. He was hit we knew, for the next morning we saw blood on the ground. The next I remember distinctly of Indians was when we lived where the town of Zephyr is now. Indians came around all the time but I remember this distinctly. We had an old man who worked around the place, helping mother in the kitchen and other chores on the place. He had a way of sitting down and taking his gun apart and cleaning it at very unusual times. Father told him that some day the Indians would catch him when he had that gun apart, and that happened sure enough.

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One spring during the round-up they were holding a large herd of cattle not far from our house and at noon this man Devine went out to help hold the herd while some of the boys came to eat their dinner. Devine sat down with his back to a tree and took his gun apart. The Indians were around him before he knew it. The boys with the herd ran to help Devine and the men from the house ran out when they heard the shots. I can still see how Devine looked when they brought him in, laid him on the bed and pulled out the arrows; one right under his left eye, two in his chest, one in his left arm, and one in his back. He didn't live, but neither did the Indians. The boys chased them, killed them and got the horses. I don't know whether they buried the Indians or not, but I remember they brought in the Indian ponies, saddles, and a big feather headdress of all kinds [?] of feathers. It hung in our 3 house for a long time and I have had it on my head lots of times. Now, here is something about those saddles but I don't like to have it told out. Those Indian saddles were made of four sticks, two crossed in front and two likewise for the back, and buffalo hide was stretched over it. Father put the saddles on the fence and we children had a fine time riding on them but in a day or two, mother found that we had acquired a supply of body lice. I have always been afraid of Indians. In the early 90's my husband, then Milt Felton, moved us out to New Mexico not far from an Indian Reservation. Bands of them slipped out and carried on devilment. Old Capitan, Indian Chief, had been sent to the pen for murdering a family of settlers. We took over part of the land claimed by Capitan, and people warned us to watch out for him. The irrigated farm was several miles from the house where we lived. My husband and a young man went up to the farm to turn on the water and work the land. Leaving the camp one day, my husband rode horseback around the field and as he dismounted his gun came out of his pocket and discharged, hitting him through the hip. Now, Capitan was standing on a mountain, heard the gun and saw my husband fall. He ran to the aid of Milt but both Milt and Capitan were afraid of each other; Milt afraid of Capitan because of the warnings and Capitan afraid that my husband would die before some one came along and he would be accused of murder 4 again. Capitan brought my husband to the camp and the young man came for me and the children. Everybody did all they could but Milt didn't recover. Capitan did all he could.

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"We were living not far from Ben Ficklin when it was washed away by the flood. I saw many of the victims brought out of the water. Some were hanging in the trees and others were washed away downstream.

"I remember a stage hold-up that took place about fifty-one years ago. We were living on Salt Creek between San Angelo and the present town of Miles. A young man who had lived around in the country, boarded at Jonathan Miles' and worked for Sol Schoonover, decided to turn robber. Our house was on the main road and travelers frequently stopped for water. This young man, Andy, came by one day before noon, asked for water and I told him as I told everybody, 'Help yourself.' My husband was away from home, but when dinner time came the fellow showed up and asked for dinner. I gave him what I had and he offered me a five dollar bill as pay. I didn't have any change and told him so. We watched him go over the hill and supposed that he had gone on his way but that night at supper time here he was again. My husband was there by that time and I told him that the same fellow had been there for dinner. They sat down and ate, but passed things and did not say a word, one to the other. When they had finished eating, the stranger put down a silver dollar and said to me, 'Well, I guess that will pay you for both meals.' That night he held up the stage not far up the road from our house. He pulled /a morrell*

*Mexican work for feed bag, which is hung over /a horse's nose for [holding?] feed.

over [each man's head?], tore out the cushions of the coach and the women all screamed and cried. Sol Schoonover was a passenger and the robber took Sol's gold watch and chain. In those days the ladies wore "dusters", long coats generally made from linen, as protection from dust in traveling. One lady on this stage coach had made a pocket in the hem of her duster and had put her money in that but when the robber showed up with his gun, this woman was so scared that she took her money out of her pocket and handed it

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over. A posse of men and officers caught the robber the next day and he was tried in court and sent to the pen.

"I have been friends with all the old timers, and have gone to parties and danced with boys who are now old men or have passed on." Range-lore

Nellie B. Cox

San Angelo, Texas.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mrs. Becky Sanford, San Angelo, Texas, interviewed, February 10, 1938.